

Untitled Grishaverse Gymnastics AU

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by [EmjenFicArchive](#)

Summary

Everyone thought there biggest problem was whether Kaz Brekker could do a good enough vault to unseat the infamous Darkling from his near-assured Olympic Gold. Turns out that was wildly optimistic.

This is an unfinished, abandoned work being posted as part of the Good Intentions Abandoned WIP Fest.

Notes

I have idea when to backdate this to, I just know that the date gdocs is saying was when the document was created can't be right.

Apparently I used a video from the YouTube channel Artitistes Gymnastics to decide what vault Kaz does here, though I didn't think to specify which video I was talking about. Also friendly reminder that I'm just a casual gymnastics enthusiast (and one who knows more about women's gymnastics than men's to boot) not a real gymnast. Therefore, take everything with a grain of salt.

The arena buzzed with tension. Inej Ghafa sat in the very first row of the stands, with her booted feet propped up on the safety rail and her arms balanced on her knees. Below her the final rotation of the men's All Around Gymnastics Championship of the 2020 Olympics was in full swing.

The crowd burst into applause as Aleksander Morozova stuck yet another landing on vault. Inej's teammate, Zoya, groaned in disgust. "Is that man literally incapable of messing up?"

"It's certainly possible," Nikolai said leaning over Alina to answer. "He didn't train with the rest of us so Mal and I never saw if he messed up in practice."

Zoya huffed and sat back with her arms folded. "I hate him."

"He's a complicated person," Alina said in a placating voice, playing with the end of her dull brown ponytail. "He's not that horrible."

"*You* would say that," Zoya gave Alina a look and the other girl didn't respond.

Inej looked away without comment. Zoya, Alina, Nikolai and Mal had once competed for the same country as the Darkling. They didn't talk about why they'd defected and Inej knew better than to ask.

Instead she studied the six men in the vault section of this rotation. She was still trying to decide if the favorites for the All Around gold had all ended up in the same group by chance or design, though she doubted she'd ever know for certain.

Matthias, Jesper and Mal stood in a small clump, talking quietly as the jumbotrons displayed Aleksander's score. It was a huge score, unsurprisingly, one that Matthias and Jesper didn't have the start values to beat. Mal might have managed it, but his 6.0 value vault was iffy and he might not manage to land it. There was only one person who might be able to take the gold from the fabled Darkling now.

Inej knew everyone in the arena was thinking the same thing she was because the jumbotron was now showing footage of Kaz Brekker and his coach Pekka Rollins locked in an intense conversation. Kaz was sitting down looking up at Rollins, and per usual looked like he wanted to take a knife to the older man in a dark alley.

"What I don't get," Nina said from her place on Inej's left, "is why he doesn't just get a new coach if he hates Rollins so much. He's one of the most promising male gymnasts alive. It's not like coaches wouldn't be tripping over themselves to work with him."

"Maybe he doesn't actually hate him," Wylan suggested, leaning his arms on the backs of Inej and Nina's seats. "I've never seen Kaz Brekker actually happy about anything so maybe we're just misinterpreting him."

Inej watched Kaz Brekker get to his feet and say something sharply to Rollins before walking away, his posture was stiff as a board. "No, I think there's actually something going on," she said quietly but didn't extrapolate. People gossiped all the time about the couple years when

Inej had vanished off the face of the earth, but she didn't normally comment. She wasn't ready to talk about how what had happened then had given her a pretty good sense of when people were in bad situations, even if something about Kaz Brekker was setting off all her alarms.

Ivan, another gymnast on Aleksander Morozova's team, completed his vault. The arena waited with bated breath for the score.

"Finally, something good," Nikolai breathed when the score flashed on the jumbotrons. "Mal can beat that, at least."

"Don't let him hear you say that," Zoya snorted. "He'll start getting delusions about being the lynchpin to your team."

"Look at him," Genya said, nodding to where Mal was chewing on his lip looking somewhere between nervous and frustrated. "I don't think he's going to be getting delusions of grandeur anytime soon."

"I wish I was down there," Kuwei grumbled.

No one responded. Kuwei was one of the alternates for the men's team and wouldn't be competing unless someone got gravely injured. Still, it made sense that Kuwei wanted to do something other than standing around watching their country possibly lose its shot at all around gold. Wylan and Nikolai were competing in the team events but not the individual all around and they looked like they wanted to be down there too.

Inej bit her lip. She hoped the women's individual all around didn't come down to something like this, or if it did it would be on beam. Inej loved beam and she was really good at it. Nina joked that it was unnatural to actually like beam, but she still maintained that Inej must have been a tightrope walker in another life.

The gymnasts watched as Jesper competed. He got a good score but not enough to unseat either Ivan or Aleksander. Now there was Kaz, Matthias and Mal.

Kaz stepped up, checking his wrist supports. His right knee was wrapped in a mass of athletic tape and he moved with a slight hitch to his step that was not quite a limp.

"What's wrong with his leg?" Inej asked.

"He wrenched it during his floor routine," Wylan said. "You saw it happen."

"I know," Inej said. "But that knee was taped up before that happened. Does he have a history of injuries to that leg?"

Everyone looked at Kuwei who could always be counted on to know information like that. "He did fall and do something to that leg in competition last year," Kuwei said after a moment. "But he was barely out for any time to recover so it must have looked worse than it actually was."

Inej watched Kaz as he prepared for his vault. There was barely any hesitation in his step, but he'd definitely been limping after his floor exercise. You didn't just recover from something like that so fast. Inej wasn't even sure if anyone had looked at his leg, and there was another thing that was bothering her.

"He didn't warm up," she said.

"What?" Nina asked.

"Kaz," Inej said. "He didn't warm up this apparatus. Everyone else did, to make sure the vault table didn't like mystically change location or something, but he didn't."

"Maybe he thought he was too good for it," Zoya said.

"He's not arrogant," Inej said. "Or at least, not that arrogant. Something's going on."

"Well, he's competing," Nikolai said. "If he really was hurt he wouldn't be."

"True," Inej said.

Alina made a frustrated noise, Inej noticed that she was looking at something on her phone.

"Why are you on your phone right now?" Zoya asked.

"I wish I hadn't looked," Alina turned her phone so Inej and Zoya could see that it was open to a news article bearing the headline "2020 Olympics brings back memories of the Rietveld tragedy."

Inej remembered the Rietveld tragedy, practically everyone did. At the last summer Olympics in 2016, Jordan Rietveld had broken his neck during the vault competition and died in the hospital not twelve hours later. In the inquest that followed, it had been found that Jordan's coach, Jakob Hertzoon, had known that the boy wasn't capable of doing the vault he'd been competing safely, but had pushed him to do it anyway. The coach had been banned and the rules about vault safety had been amended.

"I don't see what the problem with remembering him is," Zoya said.

"There's no problem with remembering him," Alina said, "but the media is turning it into a marketing campaign. They're acting like 'Hey, remember that kid who got himself killed last Olympics? He was a gymnast! Come watch other people compete and someone else might get killed!'"

Zoya looked at Inej who shrugged. "She's not exactly wrong."

After a moment, Zoya sighed. "I suppose you're right."

The whole arena fell silent as Kaz stepped up and saluted the judges. Aleksander Morozova had stopped talking to his coach and was watching Kaz like a hawk.

Kaz lowered his arms and turned to face the runway leading to vault table. He shook his right leg like he was trying to get it to loosen up. Inej's stomach clenched. She had a really bad feeling about this.

"He's doing a Shirai 2," Kuwei was saying, quietly like he didn't want to spoil the moment. "It's a Yurchenko vault with three and a half twists," he sighed wistfully. "I want to be able to do that."

"So do I," Zoya said in the tone of voice she used when she was making a promise. "None of this 'men are stronger and can do bigger skills' junk for me."

Inej almost said that she thought the odds of Zoya pulling off a Shirai 2 were pretty good, but Kaz was moving. Inej leaned forward as he raced towards the vault table, no trace of a limp in his step. He was moving fast, every bit the rookie challenger that the media had made him out to be. He neared the table and raised his arms over his head.

Round-off, backhandspring, one twist, two twists, three twists, a half.

He hit the mat hard. His right leg bowed out to the side, but his feet stayed planted. His posture went rigid, though. After a moment he straightened up and saluted the judges. The crowd erupted into cheers. Nikolai pounded his fist on the railing in front of him, laughing wildly. "Yes! That was perfect! We might have just unseated the Darkling!"

Then Kaz tried to take a step and his right leg buckled.

You could honestly hear the crowd gasp. Inej was on her feet in an instant though there was nothing she could do. She watched in horror as Kaz crumpled to the ground and curled into the fetal position, clutching at his leg.

Matthias reached Kaz first, and knelt down next to him. Inej could imagine him whispering soothingly in an attempt to calm Kaz down. Coach Fahey, Jesper and Mal were there seconds later. Oddly, Pekka Rollins didn't move.

Coach Fahey knelt down next to Matthias and leaned in close to Kaz. Matthias turned and yelled for someone to come and help. The arena was a buzz of sounds blurring over and over each other. There was nothing Inej could do from her place in the stands. She was useless and she hated it.

The first aid crew arrived carting a stretcher with them. They pushed Matthias, Coach Fahey and the rest of the team back and set to work. The announcer was saying soothing things over the loudspeaker.

Inej finally forced herself to look away from the knot of people around Kaz and she noticed that Aleksander Morozova had left the arena. She barely had time to think that Zoya was right about him before she noticed that Pekka Rollins was gone too.

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The First Ravka team had staked out the floor of an out of the way hallway to pull things together and wait for news. So far the only thing that had been announced was the scores: despite his spectacular injury Kaz Brekker had the gold by half a point, then was Aleksander Morozova. Mal had nerves of steel and was still able to pull off a bronze-worthy performance.

Alina was curled up with Mal, letting him play with her hair. Matthias did not have Mal's gift for unflappability; he had done his vault directly after Kaz was taken away by the medics. He'd done his easiest vault and finished the All-Around in seventh. He was still shaking.

None of the team members had said anything. They'd just congregated and now sat together, soaking in each other's company. Nikolai was lying on his back on the floor, arms spread wide, with Zoya sitting a little ways from him in a way that seemed designed.



Hours later, Inej sat in a hospital waiting room, watching the clock and waiting for a doctor to tell her that she could see Kaz. Nina, Matthias, Jesper and Wylan were waiting with her. None of them knew Kaz that well, because he'd always kept to himself, but they'd all felt obliged to stay to make sure he was alright.

Inej flipped through the news stories on her phone. They were all about Kaz's accident.

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